Hi, I am Kevin Beary with the Major County Sheriffs Association. The Florida Sheriffs Association Task Force deployed over 700 individuals to Mississippi deployed with Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

People plan for a disaster, and we have them frequently. However, Katrina was a catastrophe. She brought different challenges than the Florida hurricanes in 2004.

In Florida we dealt with wind and related damage. Katrina flooded equipment rooms and shut down entire systems. Had all the radio systems been on the top floor in Florida, they could have been damaged. In Katrina all the systems on the lower floors were decimated by water. That means emergency communications planners have to always prepare for a variety of threats. Their preparations must be "tuned" so their regional systems will withstand the most probable disasters to strike (winds in Florida and water in Louisiana).

Before we can have "interoperability" we have to have "operability" and the flooding shut off the "operability" supporting the response of all local agencies across entire regions. Continuity of operations planning must be effectively supported by management and widely distributed well in advance of problems such as those Katrina generated. Finally, all users must be trained on interoperability and backup systems to ensure continuity of operations.

The response to wind, rain, fire, tornados, earthquakes, requires a variety of choices in technology to maintain communications. While we have been building systems that can talk to each other, and using gateways to connect users on different systems, we have not looked at deployable systems to bring on site in the future (e.g., Cellular Systems on Wheels-COWS) when local/regional infrastructure is inoperable or destroyed.

Along with these public safety systems on wheels (SOWS), interoperability frequencies will need to be made available for licensing in a deployable, mobile environment.

Equipment and operating standards are also critical to ensure regional – all of the way up to national and international (Canadian, for example, on wildfires) – responders can communicate when they are deployed to a distant, and often remote location. Only through commonly adopted equipment standards and standard operating procedures such as NIMS, can a national response to catastrophes like Katrina be effective and successful.

Planning is critical to communications response. Statewide planning is critical. Nation wide planning is critical. Political and turf issues often must be resolved before any meaningful planning can occur. Soon, SAFECOM grant guidance used for all Federal grants to local/state government are going to require statewide plans before funding is granted. This should be supported and the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum should be used to determine levels of interoperability.

Planning, however, must start at the local level in order for local government to communicate effectively within their regions, with adjacent regions and to the state level with regard to communications needs.

Katrina Communications
Problems

- This was more of a infrastructure issue than an interoperability issue
- Infrastructure was destroyed
- No Cellular Service for approximately seven days in the western part of the state
- SAT phones were "hit and miss"
- First four days after landfall the radio range was less then 3 miles using direct
- Once the Florida COM equipment arrived the coverage increased to approximately 5 miles

Recommendation

Have large portable communication systems to include temporary towers strategically placed and available for immediate deployment.

Police and fire communications cannot be built near gulf or ocean. Must be built inland. Regional locations/not in flood areas.

Regional assets for immediate deployment must be distributed to a government agency that will get it to the devastated area within six hours after storm.

National Sheriffs
Major County Sheriffs Trained people to report to DHS Command Center to assist in
Major City Chiefs Command Control

(Pre-storm) Command Post needs to be established
FEMA – Dept. Homeland Security

Specially trained LE - CP Managers from Sheriffs, Major County Sheriffs, and Major City Chiefs assigned to DHS-FEMA CP

Follow NIMS process for proper deployment to affected area

(Past storm) Self contained – Ability to re-supply

Once communications established units must use it to inform progress or activity in area.

(Patience) (Teamwork) Egos set aside
Local State Federal all must work as a team

Coordination of Resources

Adopt the Florida model of the MAC Group (Multi Agency Coordination Group (Multi Agency Coordination Group) to handle resource allocation.

The Mississippi MAC Group was made up of ALL law enforcement components from Florida. This MAC had one to two representatives from all Florida state and local law enforcement partners that sat at one table and coordinated the fulfillment of missions based on need. The assignments must be "Mission Specific"

The MAC Group concept included placing an incident Commander (FDLE SAS) in each of the lower counties of Mississippi. These individuals were assigned to liaison between each county EOC and their respective local county and municipal law enforcement.

The Katrina relief efforts were effectively managed by the use of the MAC Group in Harrison County, Mississippi

For multi-state and EMAC (Emergency Assistance Compact) situations, it is recommended that the National Sheriff's Association look at possibly adopting the Florida MAC Group concept. The NSA could position a coordinating liason at the primary law enforcement command group (aka MAC) location. In the event DHS were to stand up a central command, I would recommend also placing an NSA representative there as well. This would assist greatly with deployment, logistics, and EMAC issues that may arise between any responding states

Self –Sustainment

ALL first responders MUST be completely self sustaining for a minimum of 72 to 96 hours, and up to seven days if possible. The resources in the affected areas CANNOT handle the influx of first responders. The local public agencies SHOULD not, and in the case of Hurricane Katrina COULD NOT provide for the needs of the first responders.

Problems with Self Deployment

Problems occurred by law enforcement agencies that "Self Deployed" to Mississippi from other states that were NOT self-sustaining. The agencies, in many cases caused an unexpected and unanticipated drain on resources already in place, by consuming food, ice, water and more importantly fuel. All responding agencies MUST be capable of self-sustainment with a minimum of food, sleeping, and hygiene arrangements.

Sanitation

It is recommended that a plan be developed and implemented to quickly deploy portable toilet facilities to the affected areas for both first responders, and those living within the impacted areas for at least the first 96 hours. There must also be a plan to pump and clean these facilities as well.

Vaccinations/Inoculations

Vaccinations/Inoculations for first responders need to be readily available immediately after the storm passes. During Hurricane Katrina it took three (3) days to locate the Hepatitis "A" vaccine for a first responder that had a possible exposure.

Temporary Morgues

We must have the ability to quickly deploy freezer trailers to use as temporary morgues and, most importantly, have personnel to support those trailers with not only security, but diesel FUEL for the refrigeration units. During Katrina, a sheriff's office from Florida had to begin fueling these trailers after a report that at least one freezer trailer containing corpses ran out of fuel and no responsible party could be located to handle the refueling. This could have created a bio hazard if the bodies were to compose.

Federal USAR Teams – Body Recovery

In Hancock County Mississippi there was a serious break down in communications between the Federal USAR Teams and local EOC as it related to body recovery.

The Federal USAR teams would locate bodies and the location of the bodies was recorded by Lat and Long.

These locations were not given to the EOC for approximately 18-24 hours.

The EOC in Hancock County offered to, and actually sent couriers on three different occasions to obtain the locations and could not get them.

We asked and encouraged them to send a representative to the daily 5 p.m. EOC briefing and no one would attend.

We gave them five (5) radios and asked them to call in the locations of the located bodies and they would not.

The USAR procedure was as follows:

- Locate bodies by Lat and Long
- Give this information to their Planning Chief at the end of the day
- The Planning Chief would complete a Sit Rep which would be available the following day at 0800
- We would then have to track down a copy of the Sit Rep each morning
- Then send out a team to re-locate the bodies and recover them
- Time frame from locating to recovery 18-24 hours